The subplot balances imitation and fancy in a different way—one that Helena needs. On the one hand, the soldiers’ improvised language is created through imitation:

First Lord: But what linsey-woolsey hast thou to speak to us again?

First Soldier: E’een such as you speak to me. (4.1.10)

On the other hand, as the First Lord also instructs, “we must every one be a man of his own fancy” (4.1.15).

Parolles’ advice to imitate one’s mother by reproducing () recalls *The Sonnets*; it is wiser than Bertram’s similar advice, calculated to fulfill a short-term wish () and Helena’s appeal to the Countess to approve her love for Bertram because of its imitative quality—a hairsplitting argument ultimately affirming a paradox ().

Helena is a different person when she is speaking to Parolles. With him, she can imagine falsehoods (“Hail, monarch!” etc.), and she keeps up with his banter, even beating him.

Parolles is the man who accommodates himself to all things. Alone (or with Bertram), he is reprehensible, but with Helena he is more admirable.